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WisDOT PROJECT I.D. 3575-09-01
UNITED STATES HIGHWAY 12
US12/WIS26 NORTH FORT ATKINSON INTERCHANGE to WHITEWATER BYPASS
Rock and Jefferson Counties

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SUBMITTED PURSUANT TO 42 U.S.C. 4332 (2) (C) and 49 U.S.C. 303

BY THE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
and
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
and
Cooperating Agencies:
US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

APPROVALS

9/19/05
Date

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Date


For the Wisconsin Department of Transportation


For the Federal Highway Administration

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ABSTRACT

US 12 is a part of the National Highway System and is classified as a connector route in the Corridors 2020 state highway plan. US 12 currently bisects the City of Fort Atkinson on a split route through residential areas and the central business district. A needs assessment showed existing and increasing congestion and safety problems on the existing route. This document reviews several alternative solutions to the problems including some potential bypass locations in addition to the no-build and transportation system management alternatives. The purpose is to:

- Improve current and future regional traffic flow to serve inter-state and inter-regional travelers.
- Improve safety for users including pedestrians, bicyclists and motor vehicles.
- Accommodate heavy traffic volumes, including heavy trucks, so that the roadway meets the role of a Corridors 2020 and National Highway System (NHS) route.
- Improve the Level of Service of US 12 in the study area.

COMMENTS ON THIS DRAFT EIS ARE DUE BY DECEMBER 14, 2005
or 45 days after the Notice of Availability is published in the Federal Register

AND SHOULD BE SENT TO:

Attn: Michelle Elias
Wisconsin Department of Transportation – Southwest Region
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Executive Summary

WisDOT PROJECT I.D. 3575-09-01

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DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Project Description

Figure E-1 on page ES-7 shows the study area, which is located in southwestern Wisconsin in Jefferson and Rock Counties. The segment of US 12 of concern goes from Whitewater to Fort Atkinson and begins at the US 12 Whitewater Bypass, west of Whitewater. It continues north along US 12 through the Town of Koshkonong and the City of Fort Atkinson. The northern terminus is at the North Fort Atkinson WIS 26 bypass interchange. US 12 is designated a Wisconsin Corridors 2020 connector route and is part of the National Highway System. The roadway is a 2-lane facility, except in the central business district of Fort Atkinson where it is 4 lanes undivided and near the North Fort Atkinson interchange where it is 4 lanes divided.

Alternative improvements of a broad range of type and intensity were proposed to improve the regional mobility of the US 12 highway system in the Fort Atkinson area. Potential improvements ranged from doing nothing to improving the existing alignment to building a new bypass of Fort Atkinson, to rerouting US 12 on another highway. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) developed alternatives in consultation with the public, a locally appointed advisory committee and cooperating and interested agencies.

Project Purpose

WisDOT identified a need to make necessary improvements to achieve improved highway operation and safety of US Highway 12 in the Fort Atkinson area of Jefferson County to acceptable levels, with the following purposes.

- To improve current and future regional traffic flow to serve inter-state and inter-regional travelers.
- To improve safety for users including pedestrians, bicyclists and motor vehicles.
- To accommodate heavy traffic volumes, including heavy trucks, so that the roadway meets the role of a Corridors 2020 and National Highway System (NHS) route.
- To improve the Level of Service of US 12 in the study area.

Project Need

- Existing roadways and intersections will have trouble handling the increased traffic resulting from projected area development. High levels of congestion are anticipated on US 12 within the Fort Atkinson Area.
- Existing roadway and intersection geometrics along with congestion, result in a higher frequency of crash occurrences at a number of intersections. Increasing corridor traffic will cause safety problems to intensify, particularly at the Main Street intersections, and the Robert Street and Madison Avenue, and South Main and Rockwell intersections. See Figure E-2 on page ES-9 for a Fort Atkinson street map.

- Improvements are needed to correct existing and potential safety hazards for through traffic on US 12 in the study area.
- Pavement condition, notably in rural areas, contributes to safety problems, especially in poor weather conditions.
- Truck traffic, recreational traffic, and other non-local traffic have an impact on the commercial and residential areas. Regional traffic traveling through the city will increasingly impact local system mobility and quality of life factors, such as noise and vibration, safety, speeding, and congestion.
- Land access/mobility conflicts occur frequently within the corridor as the highway is called upon to meet its conflicting role of providing regional mobility and local land access.

Alternatives Considered

See Figure E-3 on page ES11 for a map of the broad range of alternatives. Figure E-4 on page ES 13 shows more details about the through-city alternatives. WisDOT initially examined eighteen alternatives. After gathering input from agencies and the public, WisDOT selected six of them for detailed study in this EIS. See Figure E-5 on page ES-15 for a map of the alternatives selected for further study. Item 3 on page 33 of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Basic Sheets fully describes the various alternatives. The alternatives include the No Build alternative, a Transportation System Management (TSM) alternative, an alternative remaining on alignment, changing the existing split route into a one-way pair, an alternative rerouting US 12 to Rock County Highway N and two bypass alternatives to the south of Fort Atkinson.

A preferred alternative has not yet been selected. The DEIS provides a comparative assessment of the alternatives and is intended to assist decision-makers in selecting a preferred alternative. A preferred alternative will be presented in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) after partnering agency and public comment and testimony is weighed.

Summary of Significant Impacts

A summary of the impacts of each alternative is shown in the Environmental Matrix in Table 1. Potential impacts reviewed included traffic impacts, economic impacts, community impacts, business impacts, agriculture, wetlands, streams and floodplains, upland habitat, erosion, stormwater, air quality, noise, history and archaeology, hazardous materials, and aesthetics. Each alternative has its pros and cons as can be seen on the Environmental Matrix.

The through-city alternatives including the Transportation System Management (TSM) alternative and the one-way pair alternative would limit the impacts associated with creating a new roadway, but would not meet the need to eliminate the mix of local and regional traffic that inhibits the flow and safety of the route. With Alternative 2b, there will remain the need to widen US 12 in the rural area between Fort Atkinson and Whitewater, which will require right-of-way acquisition. The through-city routes would retain identified impacts associated with the regional traffic, on the character of Fort Atkinson's downtown.

In general, the bypass alternatives will increase mobility by removing regional traffic from downtown Fort Atkinson. The bypass alternatives would have environmental impacts associated with new construction on new right-of-way in an existing agricultural, rural, open space landscape.

Secondary effects of this project would likely include development pressure, especially at new interchanges associated with the bypass alternatives.

Public and Agency Involvement

For WisDOT, public involvement is an ongoing effort throughout the entire planning and design of a highway project. Formal public involvement for this project began in 2000 as a part of the US 12 Fort Atkinson Needs Assessment Study. A total of five public informational meetings have been held for this project, including those held as part of the Needs Assessment Study. The public scoping meetings for the EIS were held in October 2002. In addition, an Advisory Committee was formed that guided the development of the purpose and need statement, the selection of alternatives to study, and the identification of issues and impacts. The Advisory Committee was formed by the nomination of members from various local jurisdictions including the City of Fort Atkinson, Rock and Jefferson Counties, and the Towns of Koshkonong, Lima and Milton. The Advisory Committee has so far met ten times over the course of the project. WisDOT also consulted with local officials in the study area as well as area interest groups.

A public hearing will be held on this DEIS and the comments and response to comments will be included in the FEIS.

WisDOT held meetings with Federal, State and Local agency staff. Agency coordination complied with the guidelines for *Concurrent NEPA/404 Processes for Transportation Projects*.¹ Participating agencies provided their input and submitted letters of concurrence on the Purpose and Need Statement and the Alternatives selected for detailed study in the EIS. They will also be asked to review the Draft EIS and to concur on the selection of the preferred alternative prior to the preparation of the Final EIS. Other applicable local, state and regional agency coordination was also done as detailed in the EIS.

Areas of Controversy and Issues to be Resolved

Based upon public comments and through agency coordination, WisDOT identified the following primary issues.

Town of Koshkonong:

Did not want a bypass because of the expected loss of tax revenue from lands lost to roadways, negative impacts of the highway to rural character, and the potential for creating secondary growth impacts from the City of Fort Atkinson. The Town did not want to participate in the jurisdictional transfer of roads in the township.

City of Fort Atkinson:

The City has an expressed need to provide access to their industrial park and to eliminate the mix of regional traffic in their downtown, especially trucks. They also expressed safety concerns with narrow parking lanes, side view mirrors being clipped off as well as pedestrian crossing difficulties.

Towns of Milton & Lima:

Residents of these Rock County Towns felt that moving the route into their towns to avoid putting a bypass in the Town of Koshkonong in Jefferson County, is not warranted.

¹ Concurrent NEPA/404 Processes Interagency Task Group (March 1994) *Concurrent NEPA/404 Processes for Transportation Projects Guidelines*, Federal Highway Administration, US Army Corps of Engineers, United States Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Regional Travelers:

No comments were received from regional travelers.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR):

The DNR is concerned about the impacts on high quality wetlands crossed by Alternative 7. The DNR does not fully concur that there is a purpose and need for a bypass.

Other issues that would be reviewed in great detail in the FEIS on the preferred alternative include Phase 2 archaeological surveys, wetland delineation in the field, habitat identification and surveys for threatened and endangered species and more detailed relocation studies for individual farms, houses and businesses.

Other Federal or State Actions Required as a Result of a Project

If wetlands are impacted, a Section 404 permit from USACE and water quality certification from DNR would be required. If threatened and endangered species are impacted additional compliance with the Threatened and Endangered Species Act may be required.

Other Local Actions

Other recent area projects on US 12 include the reconstruction of US 12 between Cambridge and Fort Atkinson and the reconstruction of Main Street in the Village of Cambridge. The US 12 Whitewater bypass is currently under construction and is coterminous with the southern termini of the project study area for this EIS. This project is anticipated to be complete by November 2005.

Economic Advantages and Disadvantages

Considering Alternatives 1, 1a, 2b and 3, traffic congestion and the mix of local and regional traffic would continue downtown, which according to the local Chamber of Commerce, is now affecting their ability to redevelop the downtown into a pedestrian friendly shopping district with historic character. This would result in a negative impact on retail and service sales. However, these alternatives would be less expensive to construct than the bypass alternatives, and Alternatives 1, 1a and 2b would not as greatly impact the surrounding townships' tax base. For Alternatives 1 and 1a, issues associated with narrow parking lanes downtown would not be addressed which inhibits the pedestrian friendliness of downtown Fort Atkinson.

Alternatives 7 and 7a, would have a greater construction cost due to the need to purchase greater amounts of land and to construct interchanges and new roadway. The townships would lose more property tax revenue as land is converted to state ownership. At the same time, the value of the land as productive agricultural land would be lost.

A bypass would reduce the local/regional traffic mix and ease congestion in downtown Fort Atkinson, which could have a positive effect on their downtown redevelopment efforts and resulting retail sales. The efficiency of the highway for freight transport would increase, making it more cost effective for hauling goods to markets. The City's business park and other industrial and commercial uses on the south side of Fort Atkinson would likely benefit from more direct access to the US Highway, attracting more businesses to locate in Fort Atkinson.

Table 1 summarizes important details of the alternatives and associated impacts. It should be noted that improvements will be needed to WIS 89 between the Whitewater US 12 Bypass and Fort Atkinson and so, depending on the alternative, the cost of WIS 89 improvements will vary depending upon the length of highway remaining. For example, Alternative 3 would leave the entire length of WIS 89 out of the project and Alternative 7 would leave the portion between the

new bypass and Fort Atkinson. These improvements could be made using Existing Highway Improvement program funding for resurfacing, reconditioning, and reconstruction of non-interstate portion of the state trunk highway system.

Table 1: Environmental Matrix for All Alternatives

Environmental Issue	Unit Measure	Alt 1 No Action	Alt 1a TSM	Alt 2b Through -city	Alt 3 CTH N	Alt 7 Near South Bypass	Alt 7a South Bypass
Project Length							
Length to be constructed including the mainline plus ramps and other new roads not including length of WIS 89	Mi (km)	0	6.2 (10.0)	7.1 (11.4)	8.3 (13.4)	13.7 (22.0)	12.9 (20.8)
Travel distance between CTH S interchange of Whitewater Bypass and WIS 26 interchange northwest of Fort Atkinson	Mi (km)	10.1 (16.3)	10.1 (16.3)	10.1 (16.3)	17.5 (28.2)	11.9 (19.2)	11.3 (18.2)
Length of WIS 89 remaining to be reconstructed	Mi (km)	0	0	0	6.2 (10.0)	3.0 (4.8)	5.5 (8.9)
Cost							
Construction	Million \$	0	5.0	16.0	11.0	32.0	26.0
Real Estate	Million \$	0	<0.1	6.8	2.8	7.5	5.6
Relocation Estimate (2003 \$)	Million \$	0	0	1.9	1.1	1.7	1.2
Bypass Interchange @ US 12/County Line Road	Million \$	0	0	4.3	0	4.3	4.3
Jurisdictional Transfer Costs	Million \$	0	0	0	1.3	1.3	1.3
<i>Total US 12 Project Costs</i>	Million \$	0	5.1	29.0	16.2	46.8	38.4
WIS 89 Remaining 3R improvement construction	Million \$	0	0	0	9.0	5.0	8.0
<i>Total US 12 Costs plus WIS 89 Costs</i>	Million \$	0	5.1	29.8	23.9	50.5	45.1
Land Conversions to Right of Way							
Total Area	Acres (Hectares)	0	0	161 (65)	94 (38)	351 (142)	298 (121)
Wetland Area	Acres (Hectares)	0	0	2 (<1)	2 (<1)	12 (5)	1 (<1)
Upland Area (Woodland)	Acres (Hectares)	0	0	11 (4)	0	19 (8)	21 (8)
Other Area: Including Multi- and Single Family Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Landfill, Open Space/Vacant, Public/Quasi-Public, Surface Water, and Transportation	Acres (Hectares)	0	0	60 (24)	9 (4)	63 (25)	30 (12)
Real Estate							
Number of Farms Affected	Number	0	0	17	37	20	20
Agricultural area	Acres (Hectares)	0	0	88 (36)	83 (34)	257 (104)	247 (100)
Farm Unit Relocations	Number	0	0	1	2	1	2

Environmental Issue	Unit Measure	Alt 1 No Action	Alt 1a TSM	Alt 2b Through -city	Alt 3 CTH N	Alt 7 Near South Bypass	Alt 7a South Bypass
Residential Unit Relocations	Number	0	0	41	14	32	25
Business Unit Relocations	Number	0	0	4	2	1	1
Environmental Issues							
In Floodplain?	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Affected Stream Crossings	Number	0	0	1	1	2	2
Endangered Species Habitat?	Yes/No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Historic Sites/Districts identified	Number	6	6	6	2	0	0
Archeological Sites Identified	Number	0	0	4	6	1	3
Sec. 106 MOA Required?	Yes/No	Not Determined	Not Determined	Not Determined	Not Determined	Not Determined	Not Determined
Sec. 4(f) Evaluation Required?	Yes/No	Not Determined	Not Determined	Not Determined	Not Determined	Not Determined	Not Determined
Environ Justice At Issue?	Yes/No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Air Quality Permit?	Yes/No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Design Year Noise Sensitive Receptors							
Impacted	Number	86	86	86	62	15	15
Exceed dBa Levels	Number	10**	10**	10**	7**/2	3**/3	3**/2
Contaminated Sites identified	Number	79	79	79	6	2	3
Indirect & Cumulative Impacts	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

**existing units on US 12

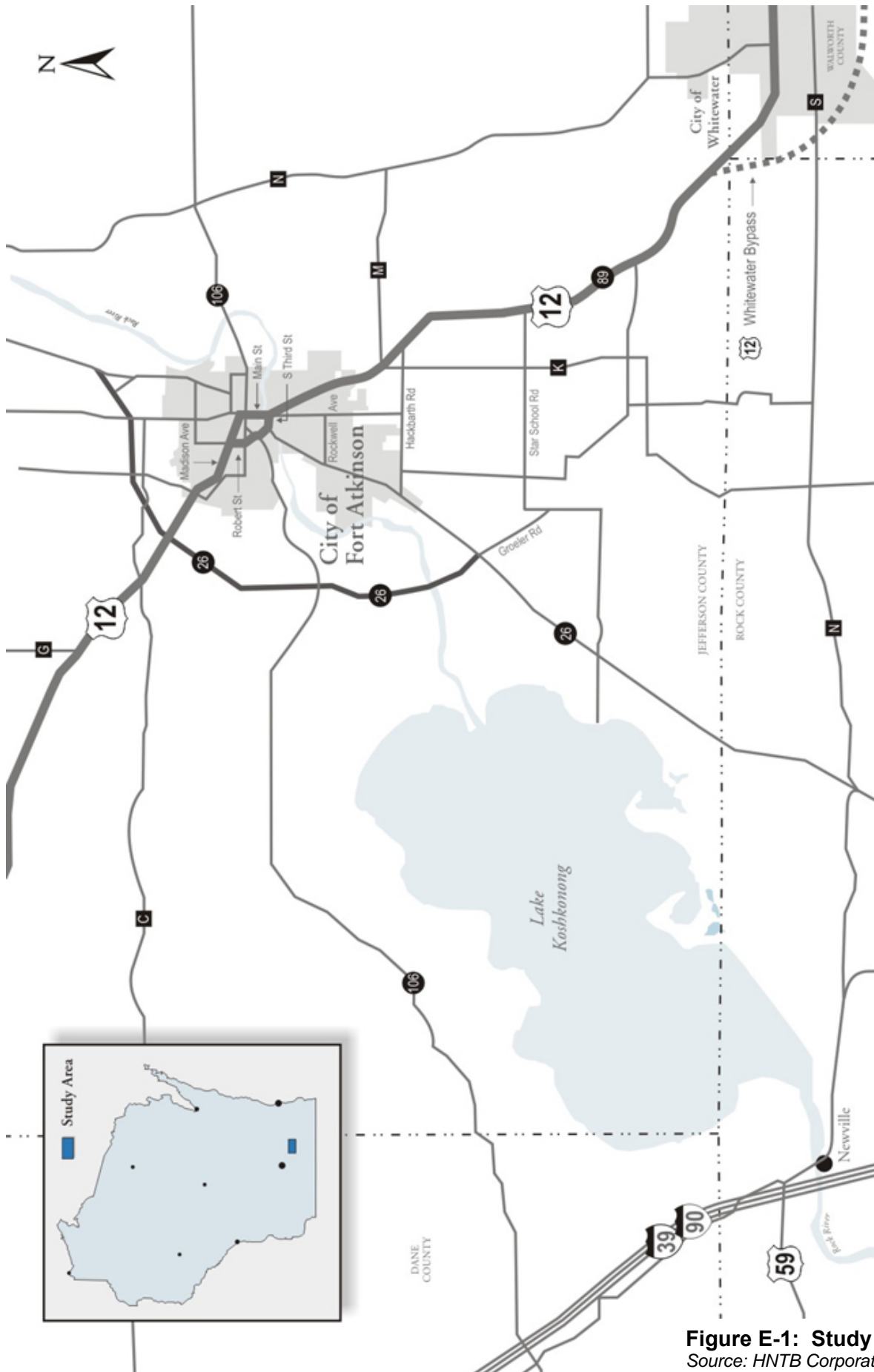


Figure E-1: Study Area
Source: HNTB Corporation



Figure E-2: Fort Atkinson Street Map
Source: HNTB Corporation

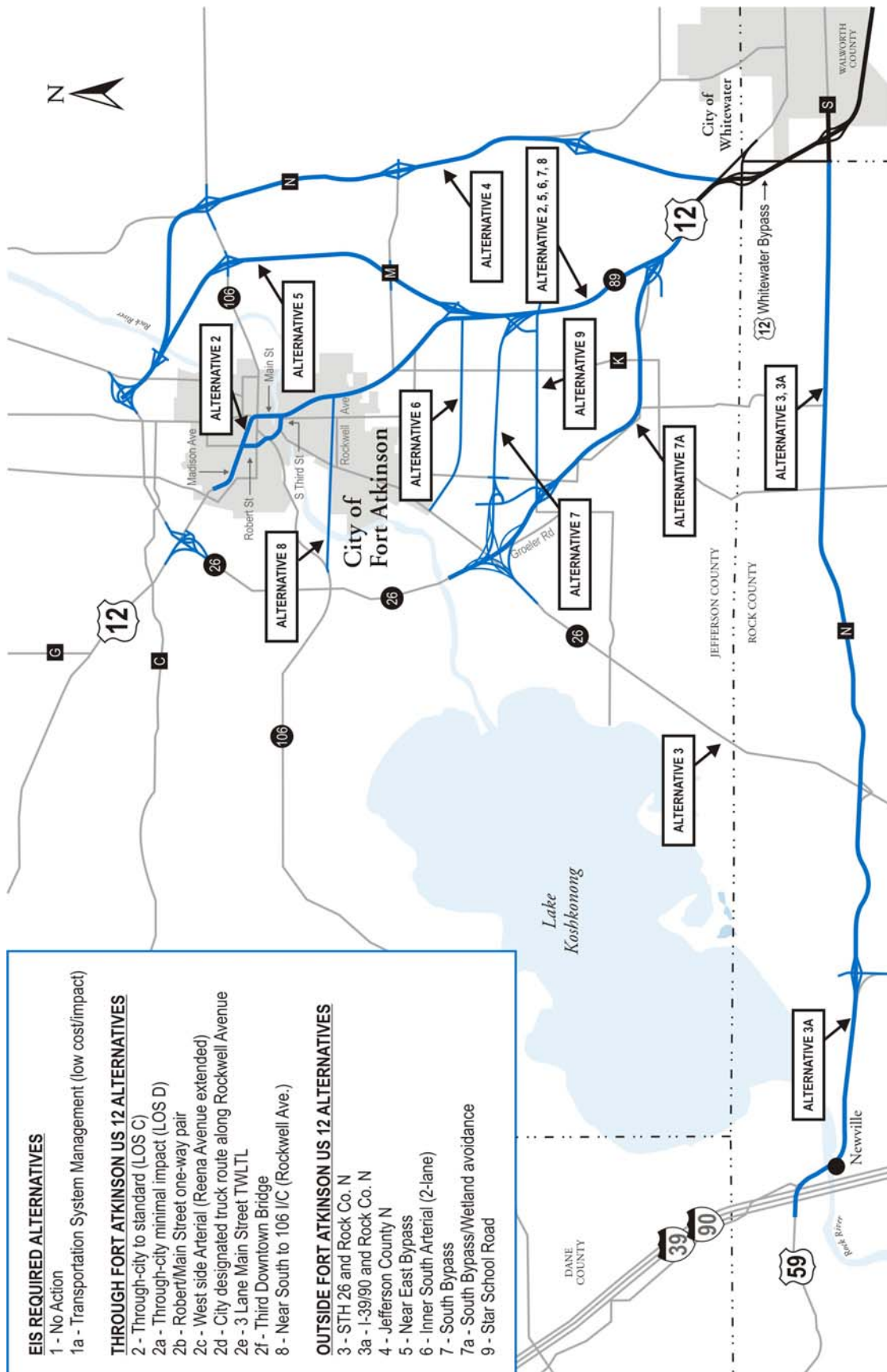


Figure E-3: Broad Range of Alternatives
Source: HNTB Corporation



Figure E-4: Alternatives 2, 2a, 2c, 2d, 2e and 2f
Source: HNTB Corporation

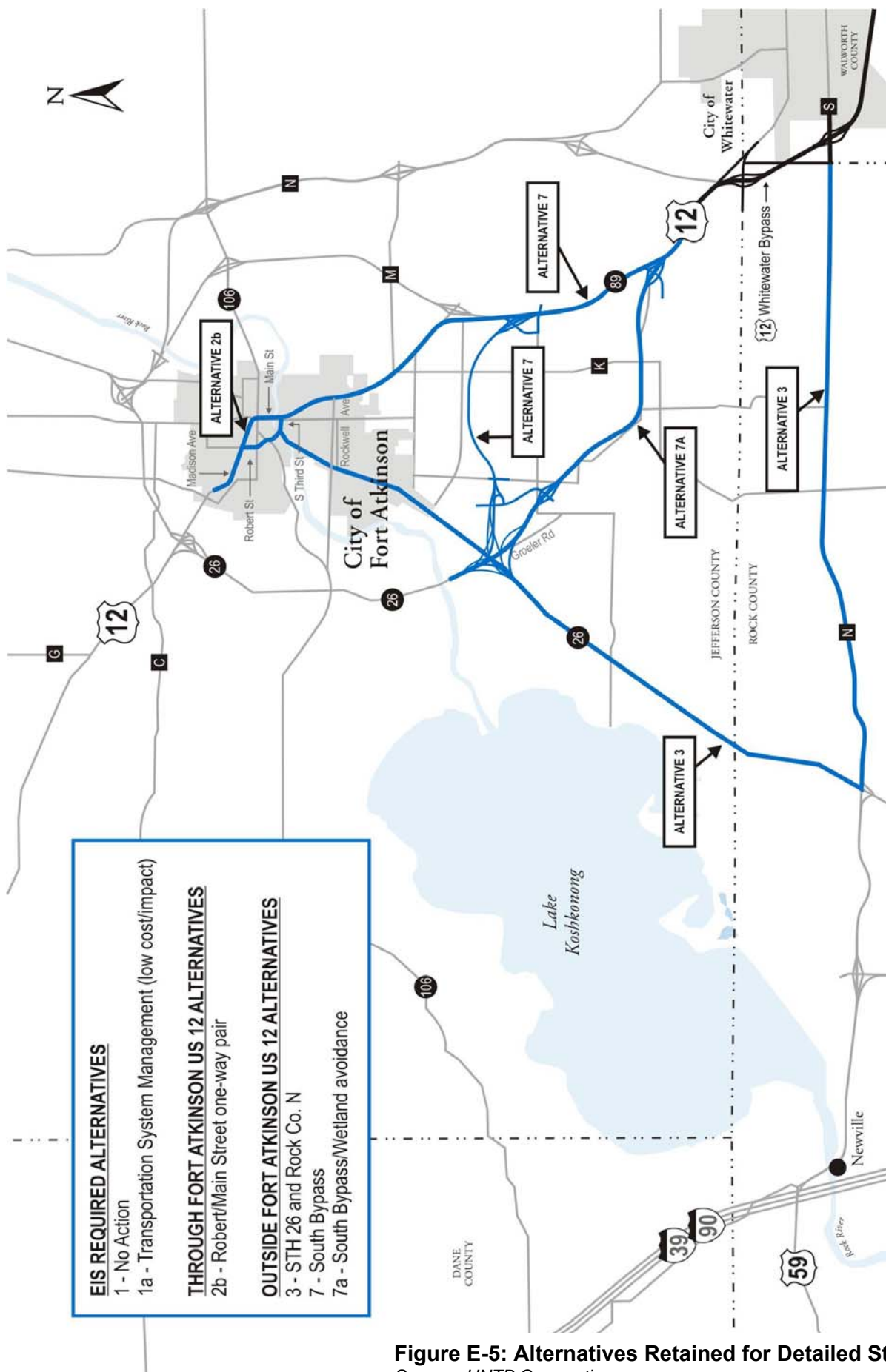


Figure E-5: Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study
Source: HNTB Corporation